



Skills for Learning Professionals

A Workforce Development Strategy for the Adult Career Information, Advice and Guidance Workforce in England

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Section 1: Introduction

Lifelong Learning UK and adult career information, advice and guidance

This paper outlines Lifelong Learning UK's approach to the development of a Workforce Development Strategy for the **adult career information, advice and guidance workforce in England**.

Lifelong Learning UK, the independent employer-led sector skills council (SSC) with strategic responsibility for the workforce development of staff working in the lifelong learning sector, brought adult career information, advice and guidance (CIAG) into its footprint in April 2009, thereby providing all employers within the adult CIAG sector in England with the opportunity to engage with a strategic UK wide perspective for workforce planning and development.

In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Lifelong Learning UK has strategic responsibility for the whole career guidance workforce. In England there is a separation between CIAG services for adults and those services provided to children and young people. Lifelong Learning UK has responsibility for the adult CIAG workforce service and CWDC for the young peoples' career information, advice and guidance workforce.

There is an affinity between the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce and the wider workforce in Lifelong Learning UK's footprint comprising those sectors involved in the promotion, support and/or delivery of formal and informal learning.

This Workforce Development Strategy has been produced at the same time as work ongoing on the Qualifications Strategy, Competency Framework and Career Progression Framework for the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce in England.

Purpose of a Workforce Development Strategy

A Workforce Development Strategy must be aspirational, accessible and deliverable for all employers and practitioners in the sector. It also needs to be practical and achievable.

The purpose of this Workforce Development Strategy is to outline the underpinning commitments and priorities that will inform the nature of the future adult career information, advice and guidance workforce for adults in England.

Structure

The Workforce Development Strategy in Section 2 of this paper is structured in the following way:

- Background and context
- Strategic drivers for change
- A service for the future
- Making the vision a reality

Section 2: A workforce development strategy

Background and context

1. Setting the scene

1.1 Adult career guidance has evolved over a long period. In the 1980s the core offer was 'educational guidance for adults' wishing to return to learning. The educational guidance offer was delivered through face-to-face settings, often in discretely funded services established specifically for that purpose, as well as through some parts of the then Careers Service.

1.2 The service is currently described as 'adult careers advice and guidance' and is delivered face-to-face via a national infrastructure of **nextstep** services (directly or on a sub-contracted basis); via a telephone and web-based offer through the national Careers Advice Service; as part of the work of Jobcentre Plus contracted provision; through FE, HE and Adult and Community Learning settings as well as via the work of a whole range of community and voluntary organisations. Provision of services may take place in or outside the workplace, via public or private sector bodies, as a discrete service or embedded within a wider offer.

1.3 While the service is wide-ranging and multi-layered, and therefore often difficult to describe, there is general agreement that the OECD definition (2004) best illustrates the breadth and range of the offer:

Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about working and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.

... in most countries career guidance is now provided by people with a very wide range of training and qualifications. Some are specialists; some are not. Some have had extensive, and expensive, training; others have had very little. Training programmes are still heavily based upon developing skills in providing help to one-to-one interviews. On the other hand, psychological testing now receives a reduced emphasis in many countries as counselling theories have moved from an emphasis upon the practitioner as expert to seeing practitioners as facilitators of individuals' choice and development.

.... Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings: schools and tertiary institutions; public employment services, private guidance providers; enterprises and community settings.¹

2. Service descriptors

2.1 From the mid-90s until recently 'adult careers advice and guidance' was generally referred to as 'Information, Advice and Guidance' (IAG) for adults, a term which is still widely used throughout the sector.

2.2 More recently, services delivered through the main publicly funded face-to-face **nextstep** offer have been described as 'careers advice for adults', and the national telephone and web offer is called the 'Careers Advice Service'. Work is currently under way to identify a common 'brand' name for both the **nextstep** and Careers Advice Service when they come together as the new 'adult advancement and careers service' in England in 2010.

2.3 The way that the 'adult careers advice and guidance' services are described has always been an issue and the subject of lengthy debate. For the purposes of clarity and consistency, as far as this Strategy is concerned '**adult career information, advice and guidance**' is the overarching term that will be used to describe the range of services on offer in England.

3. Scope of the workforce

3.1 Earlier research undertaken by iCeGS on behalf of Lifelong Learning UK² identified three strands of employer activity in the adult career guidance field:

- those employers for whom adult career guidance is a primary function
- those employers which offer adult career guidance as an important part of their service offer
- those employers who have an interest in adult career guidance (albeit sometimes not acknowledged).

3.2 The service offer broadly consists of activities (with individuals or groups) which may include: career counselling, advocacy, mentoring and in some cases

¹ Sweet, R. and Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD.

² Hughes, D., Hutchinson, J., & Neary-Booth, S. (2007) *Career Guidance Specialist Employers in the Skills for Business Network*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby (unpublished report).

coaching, combined with a number of specific activities such as job search, CV writing, interview skills, analysis and explanation of labour markets.

3.3 Practitioner roles may be defined by the type of work undertaken, i.e. generic (working with any adults seeking careers advice) or more specialist, e.g. addressing the career guidance needs of specific groups such as migrant workers, adults with mental health issues, offenders and ex-offenders. Some practitioners will specialise in front-end diagnostic and signposting; some will only undertake specific activities such as CV writing and job search. Others will undertake all of the above as well as other activities related to the context and key function of the delivery organisation.

3.4 Equally, practitioner roles may be defined by professional status. For example **professional careers advisers** are practitioners who have engaged in professional level qualifications, training and continuing professional development and who work within ethical frameworks often using a wide range of job titles³. They provide highly skilled generic career advice reflecting their primary role as a guidance practitioner. For other practitioners adult career information, advice and guidance is, to a greater or lesser extent, only a part of what they do, albeit an important part. This **para-professional** level of activity may be provided on a discrete basis or embedded within other activities. Either way, the activities of para-professionals are an important feature of the wider workforce offer and need greater recognition. They do not, however, represent the range and depth of careers advice provided by the professional careers adviser.

3.5 While there is no standardised approach to job titles across the sector, there is a need to ensure that all services provided are of a professional nature, and that the professional careers adviser role plays a key role in the provision of career information, advice and guidance to adults.

3.6 The other key feature of the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce is its dispersed nature – i.e. the delivery of different levels of provision across a range of settings, in some cases easily identifiable in others **embedded** in a range of other functions and roles.

3.7 The adult career information, advice and guidance workforce in England is not a coherent, homogenous group easily recognisable or identifiable, although the marketing of the Careers Advice Service (previously **learnirect** advice) over the years has raised the profile of this particular strand of the offer. This diversity in terms of levels of service and range of delivery settings can be both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in that it provides for a rich tapestry of provision in a variety of settings and a weakness in that it can result in a multi-layered offer not always easy to locate and, as a result, sometimes difficult to access.

³ TBR (2009) *Occupational Map for Career Guidance, Developed for LIFELONG LEARNING UK*.

Key drivers for change

4. Strategic drivers for change

4.1 The TBR study 'Skills Needs and Training Supply for Career Guidance – a Gap Analysis' (2009), commissioned by UKCES, identified four drivers for change for the 'career guidance occupation'⁴: globalisation, consumer demand, public policy and legislation and technological change. These drivers are not discrete or independent and they tend to influence each other; as such it is important to consider them together:

- **Globalisation** heavily impacts on the success or decline of individual sectors, entire economies and employment rates and is therefore a high-level driver of skills needs and change. At present the Government's drive for higher level skills is directly linked to the need to be competitive with other western and growing industrial economies.
- **Consumer demand** relates to the number of clients seeking support through the career guidance occupation at any one time. This, in turn, is inversely proportional to national economic success. As economic circumstances vary so does demand from specific groups of individuals – for example, there will commonly be higher demand from redundant adults in time of economic recession.
- **Public policy and legislation** is a fundamental driver for change as the majority of bodies currently delivering career guidance are publicly funded which, in turn, is the result of public policy and associated legislation. The manner in which many career guidance services are delivered relates directly to priorities and targets identified through public policy.
- **Technological change** has already had an impact on the way that services are delivered and how people access them. The plans for the multi-stranded adult advancement and careers service – where adults will be able to access services over the phone, via the web or face-to-face, as well as store and access their own learning records online – are current examples. Even more localised issues about advisers being able to use IT effectively and efficiently in order to ensure that in future all action plans can be stored online is an example of the impact of technological change.

⁴ This report covered both young people's and adult services and included a review of services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as England

5. Public policy and priorities

5.1 The Government has established a clear strategic direction for the future of adult career information, advice and guidance in England through the development of the adult advancement and careers service (AACS), due to become operational in August 2010. The AACS will be the main provider of adult career information, advice and guidance for the next three years and will, in turn, act as a key driver for change for the wider sector.

5.2 The AACS core offer will comprise face-to-face, telephone and online channels working together as a single seamless service providing information, advice and guidance on **careers and skills**. There will be a universal offer available free of charge to all adults regardless of their age, qualification level or employment status, with more intensive and ongoing support available free of charge to those identified as having the greatest need. The service will be based on up-to-date labour market information and will provide access to a generic skills diagnostic tool which will be available face-to-face, over the phone or online.

5.3 Adult career information, advice and guidance provision not funded through the new service will continue to provide an important part of a wider offer – for example work undertaken in FE colleges and by training providers; HE careers service provision; the work of voluntary and community groups not involved in the new adult advancement and careers service; work-based guidance activities (including those undertaken by union learning representatives) and non-publicly funded career guidance specialists. Where non-AACS agencies interact with AACS services there will be an expectation that the same commitment to quality and standards will apply.

5.4 The overarching priorities for the whole sector in the immediate future are the same:

- **The provision of careers advice linked to skills development:** The realisation of government plans, priorities and targets for skills as outlined in the following key policy papers: *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills* (July 2007); *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work* (November 2007); *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver* (March 2008); *Skills for Growth: the national skills strategy* (November 2009).
- **Helping people back to work during an economic recession:** Providing career information, advice and guidance at a time of high unemployment presents particular challenges. Increased demand in a reducing and changing labour market along with a change in the nature of those seeking help (e.g. more higher skilled, higher qualified adults) are two specific issues facing the workforce at present.

- **Professionalising and up-skilling the workforce:** The recognition of minimum standards for professional practice; the development of a consistent approach to initial training and continuous professional development across all levels and types of provision both publicly and privately funded; further development of the IT skills of the workforce and the development of a professional careers adviser registration system.

6. Qualifications, quality standards and workforce development

6.1 Concurrently with the development of this Workforce Development Strategy for the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce, reviews are being undertaken of the **matrix** quality standard; the qualifications and career progression frameworks for adult career guidance and the competency framework for the sector. This work is largely in response to the findings of both the Skills Commission review⁵ and the cross-government review of adult guidance⁶, both of which identified major issues to be addressed within the workforce development of the sector:

‘Careers advisers will only be able to help people if they are adequately trained’. Experts that we spoke to expressed strong dissatisfaction with the current training and continuing professional development for those involved in the delivery of career guidance. The two main qualifications for careers advisers are the Qualification in Careers Guidance and the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Advice and Guidance. There are inadequacies with both, though particularly the NVQ. We were told that too few of those dispensing IAG go back into the world of work to update their knowledge about occupations’.⁷

6.2 The Skills Commission, the cross-government review of information and advice and guidance for adults and research undertaken to map staff competency and capacity to deliver IAG to adults⁸ identified the need to:

- address the fact that existing arrangements for ‘information, advice and guidance’ qualifications no longer reflect the reality of the service offer
- revisit existing roles (including those of key signposters in a range of different settings); identify new roles and develop a qualifications framework accordingly, with clear progression pathways

⁵ Skills Commission (2008) *Inspiration and Aspiration: Realising our Potential in the 21st Century*. London: Skills Commission.

⁶ Hutchinson, J. and Jackson, H. (2008) *Cross Government Review of Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Adults in England, Summary Report*. London: DIUS.

⁷ Skills Commission (2008) *Inspiration and Aspiration: Realising our Potential in the 21st Century*. London: Skills Commission, p.11.

⁸ LSC (2007) *Mapping the Staff Competence and Capacity to Plan and Deliver IAG to Adults in LSC Funded Provision*. Coventry: LSC.

- identify a 'framework of levels' within which the varied roles are located and the role specified
- identify core and optional units/modules (*linked to TBR definition of soft and hard skills*), which can be individually accredited through the QCF and which link into the career progression pathway
- emphasise analytical and diagnostic skills (respondents noted that the NVQ portfolio approach focuses on process skills)
- enhance theoretical underpinning to practice – obtaining a better mix of academic and practical competency
- explore the possibility of accrediting discrete modules or units to cover specialist activities such as telephone advice; using the web to support customers; using diagnostics; and analysing and interpreting labour market information
- address the needs of staff working with specific client groups who have complex career guidance needs – e.g. those working with ex-offenders, adults with disabilities and learning difficulties, people with mental health difficulties, and refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers
- clarify expectations with regard to minimum competency requirements for practitioners – at a range of levels
- ensure systematic access to, and take up of continuous professional development
- review the fact that there is no 'licence to practise' within the sector
- take account of development in technology – for example, web-based guidance
- formalise the 'lone trader' role through appropriate accreditation.

A service for the future

7. The vision

7.1 The vision for the future is the provision of respected and trusted client-centred adult career information, advice and guidance services that address the needs of adults at different stages of their career, work or learning pathways, delivered by a workforce that:

- puts the needs of clients at the heart of the service
- is highly skilled and qualified, undertaking robust training and development, meeting minimum service standards at all levels and committing to continuous professional development to drive forward their own learning
- values and aspires to a professional service at a range of levels – professional, para-professional, generalist, specialist, discrete and embedded
- is committed to the provision of adult career guidance services in a variety of settings – within and beyond the workplace, in colleges, in the community and in other settings – face-to-face, over the phone or via the web
- is excellent at planning, delivering and managing provision
- can apply high level IT skills in both its own practice as well as in support of client access to a range of career information, advice and guidance opportunities
- recognises the importance and value of up-to-date labour market information in the delivery of services
- strives to develop partnership working with a range of other services – formally as well as informally
- is flexible and responsive enough to meet the needs of individuals as well as those of a wider changing economic environment and public policy
- attracts and supports under-represented groups to ensure the workforce grows in line with potential users and to maximise the widest pool of talent possible
- ensures equality and diversity in both the nature and content of all training and CPD activities.

Making the vision a reality

8. Equality and Diversity

8.1 Equality and diversity must be a cross-cutting theme throughout the whole of the Workforce Development Strategy and supporting documentation and as such equality and diversity must be a fully integrated within all activities. The Equality Bill currently going through parliament clearly states that *'everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the opportunity to fulfil their potential'*⁹.

8.2 Adult career information, advice and guidance sector employers must pro-actively promote equality issues within their organisations and embed processes within their practice – regardless of the level or type of services being delivered - to create an equality friendly environment.

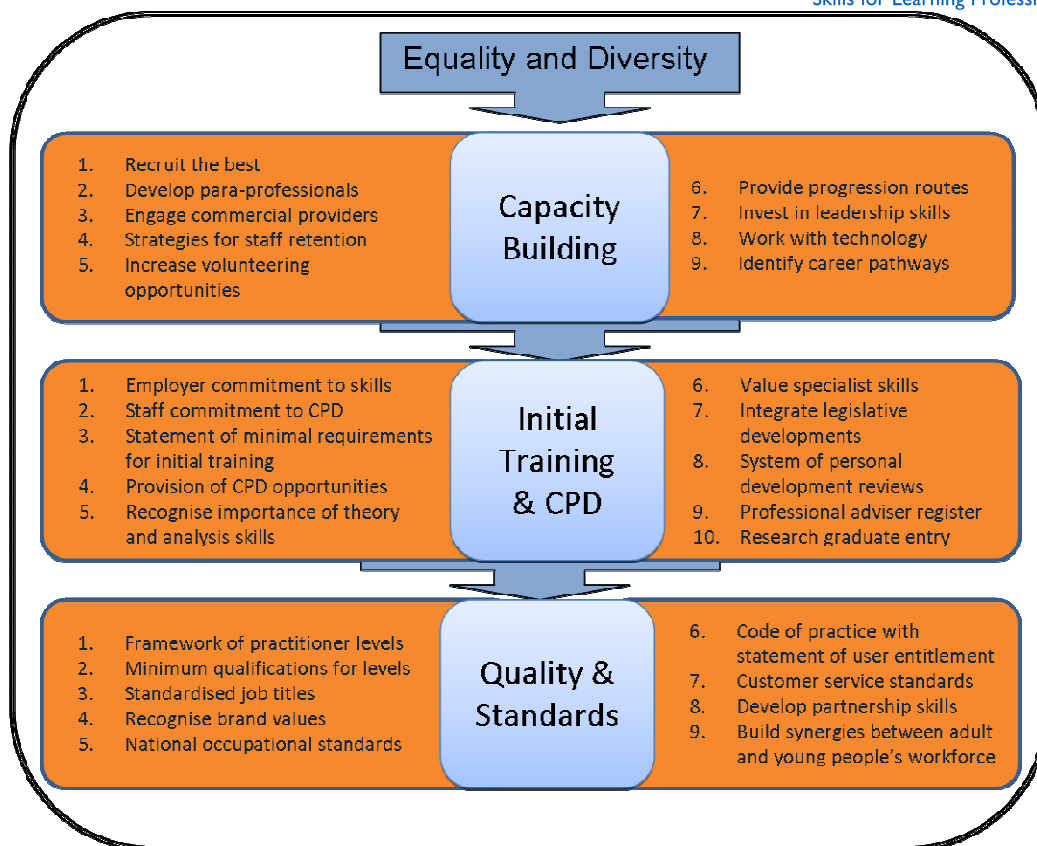
8.3 All continuing professional development activities should include the integration of awareness of the equality and diversity issues applicable to particular sectors or client groups and the equality impacts of current labour market trends, for example the need to challenge limiting stereotypes affecting aspirations for employment in non-traditional sectors for certain client groups.

8.4 Practitioners need to be supported to develop the knowledge, skills, capabilities and confidence to promote equality of opportunity for their clients, challenge stereotyping and support clients to achieve their potential. Recognition and priority should be given to the need for practitioners to develop specialist knowledge, skills and capabilities to meet the particular needs of specific or minority clients.

9. Identifying priorities

9.1 In order to meet the challenges outlined in this strategy, raise the quality and profile of the service, build capacity for the future, and realise the vision, a number of key development themes have been identified. These are: Capacity Building; Initial Training & CPD and Quality and Standards. The diagram overleaf illustrates how all of these themes are underpinned by equality and diversity:

⁹ Government Equalities Office (2009) *A Fairer Future: The Equality Bill and other action to make equality a reality*.



9.2 The themes and priorities are outlined in detail below. These will also provide the basis of the Implementation Plan for the Workforce Development Strategy.

Theme 1: Capacity building

Capacity building in this context focuses on increasing the number of practitioners in the sector, improving the skills of those already working within the sector and exploring ways of working in partnership with other individuals and organisations. This will include activities which contribute to recruitment and retention, planning, management and leadership and ensuring appropriate responses to technological change and development, such as the following:

1. Recruitment of the best people with the right skills and/or attributes from the widest possible pool of talent, recognising the need to increase representation from under-represented groups.
2. Implementation and embedding of strategies for developing and retaining existing staff in a way that raises professional standards, increases generalist and specialist knowledge and supports service development.

3. Development of the role, capacity and quality of para-professional services – particularly those delivered through embedded adult career information, advice and guidance provision and through community-based frontline services.
4. Engagement with commercial adult career information, advice and guidance providers to encourage their commitment to the standards and codes of practice of the adult advancement and careers service.
5. Increase in the number and range of opportunities for volunteering.
6. Provision of opportunities to enter and progress through the service incrementally – so individuals working in the community, as volunteers or from other sectors are provided with the opportunity to develop their skills and progress to accredited practice.
7. Investment in service planning, management and leadership skills within the workforce.
8. Working with and embracing technological change, and investing in skills development to make effective use of technology to deliver improved services at both individual practitioner and management level - in particular keyboard skills, online skills diagnostics, skills action plans and the use of web-based tools.
9. Identification of career pathways that enable progression within and between sectors.

Theme 2: Initial training and CPD

Activities which address and enhance the initial training and professional development needs of the sector to ensure a highly skilled, qualified and professional workforce and the creation and promotion of a culture of continuous learning which is valued by employers, practitioners and representative organisations, such as:

1. Employer commitment to all staff delivering adult career information, advice and guidance services (regardless of the level) being enabled and supported to gain the skills, knowledge and competencies to deliver high quality, professional services.
2. Encouragement and enablement of all staff (at all levels) to engage with the concept of continuous quality improvement and take responsibility for their own continuous professional development.
3. Development of a statement of minimum requirements for recruitment, initial training and continuous professional development, regardless of the level of activity being undertaken or setting in which it is being delivered.

4. Commitment to providing activities and opportunities that support the continuous professional development and progression needs of individual staff as well as the immediate needs of the service.
5. Recognition of the need to develop the analytical and diagnostic skills and theoretical understanding of all adult career information, advice and guidance practitioners.
6. Recognition of the importance and value of specialist skills in the workforce, and commitment to the provision of opportunities to identify and realise these.
7. Full integration of the legislative requirements of equality and diversity, adult safeguarding, disability discrimination, mental health capacity and criminal records bureau checks into all induction, training and CPD activities.
8. Development of a national system of personal development reviews and observed interventions – across the whole service – to ensure a consistent approach to continuous professional development and ensure all practitioners are being given opportunities to develop and progress.
9. Development of a ‘professional adviser register’ for the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce.
10. Further research into the feasibility of moving towards a ‘graduate level’ adult career information, advice and guidance profession.

Theme 3: Quality and standards

Overarching activities and aspirations needed to achieve a consistent approach to quality and standards for the whole of the adult career information, advice and guidance workforce:

1. Identification of a ‘framework’ of practitioner levels in which all adult career information, advice and guidance practitioners can locate their activities and identify clear career and progression pathways to guide their professional development.
2. Identification of minimum qualification requirements for different levels of service (to be reflected in the sector service standards) and introduction of observed interventions.
3. Movement towards nationally standardised job titles across the adult career information, advice and guidance sector.
4. Recognition of the value of a ‘branded’ adult advancement and careers service and the set of values and principles which will underpin it.

5. Development (revision) of a set of National Occupational Standards that will effectively underpin all levels of activity and facilitate career progression through the identification of core and specific standards.
6. Development of a nationally recognised code of practice for adult career information, advice and guidance practitioners, with a linked statement of user entitlement for service users.
7. Development (or application) of a set of customer service standards for use in adult career information, advice and guidance settings.
8. Investment in the development of partnership and networking skills to underpin the service offer.
9. Identification of ways of facilitating synergy and smooth transition between the young people's and adult workforce to ensure the development of a flexible and multi-skilled workforce.



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